"Abstract"

Elizabeth Smart's writings--her theory and practice of art--present patterns of change and constancy. Art, initially constituted in an entwined and supportive inter-relation of nature, love/passion, God, inspiration and will, is in its maturity generated from within a dissolution of the supportive context. Art finds its power of expression in opposition to nature and in the absence of God. By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept presents art in its true creativity: creating unity from a central visionary perspective. From this point onwards art falls away from its metamorphic principle of transformation, in an enforced exile, and in the later works becomes an expression of the radical separation of nature (and love/passion) from the visionary perception. Art without a supportive environment is actualized in a self-referential creation, a "magic marriage of words," that is still, however, a transformation (of tragedy into comedy) and an expression of a potentially redemptive God-like wrath and will.

ELIZABETH SMART:

THE SHIFTING BOUNDARY BETWEEN NATURE AND ART

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Introduction

When By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept was republished in paperback (in England) in 1966, Brigid Brophy's introduction presented an interpretation of Elizabeth Smart which established the main lines for all subsequent approaches to this author. A framework was created consisting of dichotomized concerns: on the one hand, questions of genre, metaphor, structure and allusion were raised and avenues of consideration outlined; on the other hand, attention was directed to the biographical background and presumed motivation for the work. This manifested dualism in critical response has echoed throughout the last twenty years, fuelling at times blatant polarization among critics. Brophy wrote that the text "is one of the most shelled, skinned, nerve-exposed books ever written. It is a cry of complete vulnerability" (15), and this observation has been repeated since: Mary Hope in a review article in the Spectator (1978), characterized the work as, "a protracted howl of pain and ecstasy";[1] and Jill Neville in an appreciation after Smart's death (Aquarius 1986) referred to By Grand Central as "the ancient cry of woman wailing for her demon lover, with something of the rawness of an alleycat in heat" (146).[2] The idea that the book is "after all a simple love-triangle written by a young girl with scorched hands" (Neville 146) is in marked opposition to Alice Van Wart's introductory comment to Necessary Secrets (1986): "Far too much has been written about the biographical implications.... Quite simply, it is the book she had been preparing for ten years to write.... [It] is about Smart's life-long love affair with language."

It seems clear that the chief obstacle to a clarification, exploration and

possible resolution of this persistent critical dualism is directly related to the availability for many years of just this single text of Smart's literary production (1945 one printing, 2000 copies, then 1966 [republication] to 1977 and the appearance of Bonus, a small book of poems). The corpus is not large in terms of published works, but quite copious where informal diaries and notebook writings are concerned. It is only from the period of the late seventies that other items have surfaced, and from 1985 onwards Canadian publishers (Deneau, Tanks and Coach House) have been actively engaged in the presentation of the informal journals, edited, ordered and excerpted--Necessary Secrets, Autobiographies (1987), and Juvenilia (1987).[3] The National Library of Canada has itself become involved, having acquired the journals and other papers, and is currently organizing these items for public reference. Major critical undertakings will undoubtedly be preempted until all the evidence is collected and digested.

What seems necessary at the moment is a critical endeavor which will outline systematically and comprehensively Elizabeth Smart's theory and practice of art over the course of her entire production. This effort should be governed by an interpretive imperative to bring the perspectives of art and life, love and language into an insightful relation. Certain focusing questions should be formulated: Is By Grand Central accurately characterized as an expression of pain? What is the role of art with respect to love? What of the problem of structure? Michael Brian Oliver in an article in Essays on Canadian Writing (1978) has suggested, in a Blakean interpretation of the text, that it is structured on a pattern of revelation (112), thus opening up the possibility of new perspectives on the functioning of art (the reading is somewhat weakened by a failure to consider the actual use of metaphor,

allusion and repetition in his thematic and compositional considerations; then too Oliver is inhibited in the end by the strictures of the love-triangle plot).[4] Finally, what potential illumination of structural ordering may derive from consideration of the element of dream, and of the concept of dream logic?

This is not to say that ground has not already been cleared by existing criticism. Brophy herself has been suggestive with respect to genre, enumerating several potential models, including rhapsody, liturgy, and the "poetic-prose" of Jean Genet. The issue of "poetic prose" was broached, although not definitively articulated. Oliver has resorted to the phrase "concentrated prose" (108) to distinguish prose which is poetry, not just like poetry ("poetic prose"). The thornier problem of novel will probably remain at issue until some ordering principle for By Grand Central, other than plot, has been identified. Certain qualities of this initial work have been noted: the style, with the "interchanging of the actual and metaphoric throughout" (George Barker in Autobiographies 75); the spontaneity and drama generated through periodic use of the present tense; the confessional and subjective, controlling vision and tone; and the rhetorical and heard sound of the mute written words. These are all points which have surfaced and been given a preliminary recognition. Reflection on and co-ordination of these observations will help to flesh out the nature of artistic experience in By Grand Central and in so doing to provide a measure by which to evaluate Smart's other works and thoughts about art.

This paper will, then, add to the existing structure of Smart criticism by approaching the author's corpus of published writings chronologically and systematically, attempting to outline the fundamental features of her art in

each of the individual works. In so doing it will reveal and expand upon a basic five-fold aesthetic foundation, and it will also demonstrate a chronological development in her theory and practice of art in these writings. To do so, it will focus in particular on three non-discursive works, "Dig a Grave and Let Us Bury our Mother"[5] (1939), By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept, and The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals (1978). The guiding principle throughout the investigations of all materials has been the imperative to bring the artistic element into relation with the personal and with life.

I

The Configuration of Terms

Throughout her life, Smart thought and wrote about her art consistently within a framework provided by a small group of terms: nature, love/passion, God, inspiration and the will. Her major publications, diaries and poetry present inter-related themes and structures that are grounded in these terms. The various definitions of art expressed both in the poetry and diaries are grounded in a particular relation among these elements of reference. The differing configuration of the terms as documented over the author's lifetime are indicative of changes of definition, of emphasis and of alignment. It is not the addition of new considerations and themes that constitutes Smart's evolution as writer, but the changing interaction and conflict among the essentially unfolding components of her vision that impart the unique and identifying characteristics of the stages in her writing.[6]

Of the terms mentioned nature, love/passion and God have perhaps been most

readily and frequently recognized by readers and critics of Smart's writings, while inspiration and the will have on the other hand received far less attention. And yet inspiration, (or the idea of the muse as it is more specifically named in the later writings), and the will are as integral to Smart's conception of art as the others, and all are together involved in the problematics of conflict and changing relation as her art evolves.

Broadly outlined, the shifting pattern of relations among these terms, as presented from the earliest notebooks to the latest diary entries, is dominated by a movement of the idea of art from a harmonious (even if always paradoxical) connection with nature and love/passion to a position of opposition to and independence from nature and love/passion. Art comes to be defined as an activity divorced from the motivation and model presented by human love/passion seen as assimilated to nature. Thus, while in the first notebook entries, and in the earliest artistic experiments, life and love (viewed as a positive alliance of the human and nature) are considered anterior to art, "love is large and permeating and accepting, like nature. It is not a calculated, civilized thing. It is not an art, but religion" (Secrets 78); and their union through a spiritual process of melting and merging is only revealed, abstracted, heightened by art:

> Art is only the realization, capture, and condensation of the moment, in any time, any place: a woman's head like a bird, bent, a oneness with a stone.... Any moment out of a million that has pierced your heart in this little life.
>
> (meantime 73)

In the later writings the exalted prior position of nature and love/passion in the artistic process is quite reversed, and nature and love/passion, while

still imaged in a relation of union, have been reduced to being seen as tools for human propagation. As such they are increasingly, emphatically removed from association with art, and with God:

> Nature makes mother love, parental solicitude, for the going on of the species. Perhaps passion comes under this heading, too. God is not involved in this, anymore than he is in who sleeps with who or how. Is this not clear? (meantime 132)

Clearly, by the time of the writing of "In the Meantime: Diary of a Blockage" (1982)[7] purpose is created for life through art and God, "Would I, could I, budge without a purpose? Without art or god" (meantime 155); and art is even imaged as the liberator of life and passion:

> If only, every day, day after day, a little scribbling could take place, the obscure design the larger purpose would emerge and the whorey horse dash off over the landscape. (meantime 137)

> I can't let you out, P, until I have a place where you may safely graze. Then you shall be my own true free-ranging Passion of the later years. Build your yard, then make your frame. Passion wants out.... (meantime 156)

Two poems published, in 1982, as part of a collection called "Eleven Poems,"[8] reiterate this position, this time from the perpsective of the muse: the muse does not approve of any interference from the womb, or from human love. The creative impulse is generated only when the womb rests, when the long "[parenthetical]" (meantime 144) involvement with the body is finished:

Can women do?

Can women make?

When the womb rests

Animus awake?

.....

Eschew, true woman,

Any late profligacy

Squandered on the loving of people

And other irrelevancy,

Useful in the dark

Inarticulacy,

But drop it like poison now

If you want poetry. (meantime 27)

The muse is an essential part of the making of art, an interjection into the human of an "inspiration descending like lightning from Heaven" (meantime 144) and in distinct opposition to the womb. This later characteristic dependence of Smart on the identification of the muse of poetry with a holy inspiration deriving from God, is an expression of the same antagonism between art and life that becomes progressively evident in Smart's writings.

The divergence of art from life (love and nature) is most emphatically stated, however, through the evolving conception of the will in the maturing Smart. While her writings are persistently dominated and sustained by a commitment to the will, the earlier idea of will projects, almost exclusively, a purely animal force (it is the will that creates the dramatic and

poised-for-action quality of her metaphoric language and places emphasis on the power of the verb in human affairs) in contradistinction to the later alignment of the will with the idea of the wrath of God, with holy energy, with the force of judgment.

Such, then, is a summary overview of the movement of Smart's art and her thought about art conceived through a concern with the function of nature, love/passion, God, inspiration and the will. There is a discernible pattern of change in the relation of these essential unfolding elements that can be succinctly described as a progressive divergence and separation of language, and thus art, from the intimacy of a bonding with nature and human passion, to the extent that writing comes to participate to a degree in a nonsense realm or a realm without external reference:

> Dido cried, like a million others.
> But it isn't her tears
> That sear the years,
> Or pity for girls with married lovers
> That light up the crying I
> With the flash that's poetry:
> It's the passion one word has for another. (meantime 36)

The patterns of change and realignment that isolation of these terms of interpretation describes can be most readily seen in an examination of three of Smart's works: the early novella "Dig A Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother," the metaphoric and allusive By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept, and the more aphoristic The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals (hereafter referred to as "Dig A Grave," By Grand Central and Rogues and Rascals). Each work presents an unique pattern of interaction among the central terms of

Smart's artistic journey that is reflected in the structure and language of each. Each work thus presents a different conception and expression of art.

II

"Dig a Grave": Harmony at the Threshold

"Dig A Grave" was written in 1939, although not published until recently. The work generally has been called a novella, a young girl's description of escape by sea to Mexico, from the "fierce will" (43) of a domineering mother. The foregrounded action concerns the involvement of the narrator, a young girl (Betty), with group of three artistic people (a male painter and two females, one a poetess) a "mariage à trois" (53), in fact. The youthful narrator disclaims the idea of her account being a novel: "This is no novel. No characters are portrayed. No one develops as the pages accumulate. I am the only character. Me floundering in my own monotonous seas, other people the points, only, by which I measure my own growth" (73). But, paradoxically, the realistic support structure (e.g. setting, characters, and action) is much more in evidence here than it will be in By Grand Central, and the measuring points do have the autonomy of being, and distinctiveness that imparts a substantiality of character which is altogether absent from By Grand Central.

"Dig A Grave" is the culminating expression of the increasingly insistent message of the voice of Smart's notebooks for union and harmony in life:[9]

> O to leap, to leave the endless becoming, to be sea,
> be sky, be wind. (48)

> Be sea, be sand, be the sun's mistress. Let the wind's

> hands and hair be your hands and hair. Inside and out. Keep no single resistance back. Urge the rhythm to their rhythm till the rhythms beat in tune--a sustainable happy tune, though so wildly happy! (84)

> I took the vomiting body of humanity to my bosom....
> O I am in the thick of it; I love love love this humanity, my humanity, my people. (44)

> It would be heaven to achieve harmony with every person and place forced on one. And harmony would be the St. Peter's key to get you into this heaven. If you carried it who could threaten you with excommunication? (56)

The dominant images are of englobing, "enveloping," "expanding," all repetitions and reiterations of the initial bliss of the womb (48):

> I say "lover," but he has no features, no name to shatter my peace. When I think of him of the great expanse of warmth where his shoulder is. I sank into that. I merged, melted, dissolved. He came into me, but it was me falling away into him. I burrowing deeper and deeper, until I could be surrounded on all sides in that unborn state. He was becoming my womb. (49)

This one supremely perfect state of human communication, love and understanding has become a potential paradigm for all relations, sexual--female to male and female to female--and natural:

> The moon forces my mouth open, and my teeth, and enters

> me as I lay shaking in the brittle beige grass. Like a baby forcing the womb open, its electric globe forces my mouth open. It is in me. (70)

> Ruth, Ruth. I will be your mother. And with the consoling kisses receive again my mother from your lips. Not to her womb again. But she into mine. I am hiding the thing that haunts me in my womb. But my womb is as large and as forgiving as the world. I walk complete and free, the giver of life. (91)

The almost endless examples of wombing and "enwrapping" (65) emphasize the thrust to harmonize, "to loop one's life" somewhere, to something (66), but indiscriminately. "To be sea, be sky" ... (48) is the same as to be eternally in the womb: to make love is to transform the heterosexual becoming to the constant of an undelivered womb. Nature, human passion, God, the will and inspiration are hardly distinguishable, and seem to exist as elements of potential rapture, entwined and supportive. What are to become the chief components of Smart's conception of art are envisaged at a point of imminent hope, wherein each element takes its cue from the potential paradigm of reintegration, and all are coalesced at the threshold of re-creation. The concept of art that emerges, is expressive of this interwined communion of elements and art is made subservient to the thrust of passionate reunification.

"Dig a Grave" is an account of arrival at the "threshold of sensual love" (63): the imperative at this point is to be open to "receive and receive" (62), to explore the endless possibilities of openness. The power imparted by

the surrender to such passion is the power exhibited in the process of natural blossoming, and the human and the natural merge in the narrator's invocations. This merging process climaxes in the moon episode, quoted above, in which the moon and the firmament enter the narrator's body and the narrator is made the moon's element. The accumulating images of the text are a constant reiteration of the identification of human and natural mergings, and of the interpenetration between the spheres.

God is outside the narrator's universe in one sense, but is imaginatively near and permeating in another. God is removed, yet provides the watching eye, and God is the sanction for the narrator's striving towards love and harmony: "Love, I am knocking at the door: for God's sake let me in (54)!" God also has the familiarity of an authority regularly communing with a devotee: "You see, God, this was my true heart speaking" (83). God is thus directly named by the narrator and identified as playing a role in the unfolding of the adventure of escape, and the thrust towards a new beginning. Indirectly, too, his presence is felt through the use of words such as "mystery" (51) to qualify the process of expanding into the wonder of life, and "revelation" (51) to describe the function of language, spoken and written, in its relation to that great mystery of life. Finally, the narrator envisages her coming to life as "the delicate upward surge, the tentative heavenward flowering of another human being" (60)--the marriage of the human and of nature in the spirit of God.

Inspiration is not directly named as muse in this story, but the narrator is oriented towards invocation as a summons to power for the voice:

> Eyes! Glance! Tongue! Come to my rescue, say the
> lubricating word, the harmonious terminator or continuer,

> overrule this shyness stuck where the throat's lump booms
> in the silence. (72)

The narrator's voice seems dependent, in part, on this address to powers of impetus--primal sensual powers--outside the control of conscious self. This voice conveys a strong sustaining sense of the animal quality of human existence, of passion, quite congruent with the unified natural and spiritual context for the harmonious merging, both in life and art, that is imaged by the story's I. The narrative voice is constituted throughout the novella as a potential centre invoking the sources of power pervasive in the universe--a potential centre dedicated to a denial of self in the quest for a power of revelation.

Inspiration is directly relevant to the concept of will in the narrator's concerns. "Dig a Grave" places the will at the centre of its creative vision:

> But whose will though voracious for self-denial, can hasten
> the metamorphosis? (48)

> Darker darker the mystery closing down until the blind mind
> looks within, is joggled will-lessly and floats in a pool
> of contemplation, takes shelter from the night. Is afraid of
> revelation. These blind protective mists are terrible.
> They confiscate every sense. They annul all antennae. Should
> I make a list, a resolution of will power? (51)

The narrator here links will to an idea of "self-denial" that is integral to the metamorphic process eagerly sought, and establishes the will's assimilation to sensual perception. There is a distinct opposition drawn, moreover, between mind and will: mind, being inhibitive towards sensual

"antennae," performs only will-less, passive, contemplative functions. And contemplation "Is afraid of revelation." The description of the will in these statements suggests an active and devouring power animating the movement to harmonious integration that is reiterated in the main thematic conflicts of the story--conflicts that become battles of wills (the I and her mother and the I and Peter). The will of the I is at this point forcefully tending towards cooperation with the universal sources of harmony, in the direction of continuous self-effacement.

Art, in this universe of encircling, functions to provide the protective covering, the "drapery." The vivid, the terrifying, and the wonder are in life:

> That was my life out there, frail, fluttering. No wonder we insulate ourselves from wonders. Poetry is like this, it is life moving, terrible, vivid. (51)

> All about my room, like clothes, are hung my images, they are locked in bureau drawers; when I am alone I take them out to stroke. I wove such mirages. I dare not tell you why. They are my drapery. (92)

Life is in the foreground, passionate and flowering, and art must be careful not to subvert "[the wild heart-beat], [the truth that trembles]" (71). The narrator fears the intrusion of the analytical spirit that measures and dissects, and prays for art which is "a form, the realization, capture, and condensation of the moment" (73) in an image unconnected to rational laws of succession: "Can I not become an image gazing at an image, and not the distant analytical one, saying what next (63)?" The narrator's expressed fear

for the inhibiting effects of analysis with respect to responsiveness forms the clearest statement of the essential conflict underlying artistic expression:

> Less and less I am able to speak, to tell, to know what is in my mind. It is the fear of breaking down the multiple images.... I only want the covering, the merging. There is the fear of not being able to receive if there is any too-definite thing in the mind, or obsessive feelings causing static to reception. (62)

This statement focuses the thematic conflict of the story, the I's opposition to the mother and Peter, characters crabbed, obsessive and restricting, within the framework of language and art. The imperative of the voice is the image: the merging and the covering. The image is the guide out of the "wilderness" into the "tenderness" of integration (63).

"Dig a Grave" is a young female's account of her arrival at the "threshold" of life, and of sensual love. The narrator, overwhelmed by the promise of life (this is made particularly clear through the fascination with the Ruth character) places art in a subservient position to life. It is after all life's great mystery out of which she means to "father the quick gold meaning," (51) and art becomes an oblique language, a "drapery" (92). The potency of the endlessly open existence circumscribes the function of art to an expressive but protective language. Passion is the motivator and is at the base of the artistic perception: "But what colouring power it has! See with those flowered eyes and later again with no flowering" (72). There is too, an undeniably fierce fear associated with such passion which necessitates the covering, as the I uneasily declares, "Here my eyes become wild animals who

have never seen human beings, they dare not watch love approaching" (63).

For Smart, "Dig a Grave" marks the thresholds of both passion and art: she was soon to be consumed by her affair with George Barker, and to produce her chief work, By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept. A cursory comparison of the apprentice novella, "Dig a Grave" with By Grand Central, makes it clear that with the earlier work, the ideas and practice of art are still formulating. "Dig a Grave" suggests the desirable adoption of a language which is oriented towards image as a diversion, almost an escape from the predominate integration theme. The artistic practice has not yet evolved to meet the terror and the power of nature and love/passion head on, to give their intimate expression. As well, the narrative structure, thematic opposition, and character presentation continue to stand comparison with traditional narrative, even with the short story. The language unit is still for the most part the traditional paragraph ordered according to a realistic narrative sequence. Looking backwards from By Grand Central, there is a feeling that latent meanings are submerged in the exhilaration of escape and the "trembling on the threshold" (54): the cohesiveness, the sustained bonding achieved among the terms of reference--nature, love/passion, God, inspiration, and will--camouflages a hidden complexity in the individual terms that in By Grand Central causes a dissolution of harmony, a restructuring of the pattern of relations and a differing exploration of artistic accomplishment.

III

Dissolutions

In By Grand Central the individual reference points in Smart's developing practice of art are extended to include the expression of a fundamental duality that had been operating in the unseen places of "Dig a Grave": nature includes "the earth whom nothing but love can sow" (28), but also is likened to a "perpetual whore" and its power to a "poison" (21); human love is understood as harmonious reintegration, but also as an awareness of sorrow and mortality ("I am shot with wounds which have eyes that see a world all sorrow, always to be, panoramic and unhealable" [26]); God's image is extended to include wrath as well as love; inspiration enlarges the pool of sources from classical legend to include key figures of Biblical legend, all connoting both metamorphic power and the impulse to calamity; and the will includes both the animal image of muscle, and the religious idea of the will and wrath of God's judgment.

What in "Dig a Grave" were only cues to a darker and more complex vision have in By Grand Central been exposed and given a fuller expression. The ambiguous and shaded conclusion of "Dig a Grave"--"Are you happy? Are you happy? Yes, we say, weeping with an unhealable woe. The palms weep too, and in the north the pines. And the wind howls. But my mother is in my womb" (92)--presages the lines already quoted, in part, from By Grand Central, equating the experience of love with that of sorrow (26). The ideas and images of evil abound, and in Part One dominate: "perpetual calamity" (20); "murder for [the] future" (20); "the legends here are all of bloodfeuds" (22);

the "Beginning ... will surely strew our world with blood" (24); "the poison oak [that] thrusts its insinuation under my foot" (24); "the guillotine in action" as the pattern of fate (24); "the hand that casts the octopus shadow" (20); and "the clouds that form a long black rainbow out of the mountain" (31). The thrust towards harmony, melting, and merging, so strongly voiced in "Dig a Grave," is completed and extended in By Grand Central as a movement at once towards harmony and disharmony, towards joy and sorrow.

By Grand Central is the mature expression of both the explicit and the latent tendencies of "Dig a Grave": the artistic achievement of this work is the fullest and most ideal expression of art based on the motivation towards universal harmony, attained through an extensive use of metaphor and allusion (there are thirty-five direct allusions to mythic, biblical and historic figures alone in slightly over one hundred pages) and through a composition based on a principle of repetition. But the artistic achievement is also the strongest expression of opposition to harmonic integration, and this is particularly manifest in the structural tension of the text.

This duplicity in By Grand Central is built upon the breakdown of the pattern of cohesiveness, strength, and cooperation among the identified elements forming Smart's artistic frame of reference, the very pattern upon which the text of "Dig a Grave" was founded. The new creation shifts the patterns of relations, with the unfolding of latent significations in the individual terms. The terms nature, love/passion, God, inspiration and the will are realigned. Human love now assumes a markedly ambiguous relationship with nature (love participating in and at other times creating its idea of nature); God no longer permeates and seems accessible within the human sphere; inspiration is derived through a concentering of transforming power invoked in

the word (broadly in language and allusion); and the human will assumes the role of God's will in the universe, and bends towards the goals of judgment and the "roar of authority" (meantime 157), if not epiphany.

The new configuration, that is essentially characterized in the opposition of nature and love/passion and the absence of God in human communication, is realized through the movements of the text. The shifting of relations of terms becomes the thematic narrative of By Grand Central. The compositional structure and language patterns are generated as the process of realignment of the elements of nature, love/passion, God, inspiration and will. This process is itself best understood as an active battle of voices, a persistent alternation of conflicting perspectives. The text presents the process with remarkable dramatic tension and considerable artistic technique.

Art in its true creative sense is, in fact, generated out of this breakdown in the previously indiscriminately interwined and supportive network of elements. "Dig a Grave" could present only a potential centre given an essentially passive conception of art. The sources of power met and cohered in the female I in the early novella, emphasizing the derivative motivation of the narrative. God's removal from the intimacy of human contact creates simultaneously a void and a space for human action: the human is made aware of possibility and the ambiguity of nature presents possibility as an imperative.

The following discussion of By Grand Central will outline the dissolution of the first harmonious integration of terms, isolating the particular changes in relations as they are made evident through language, structure and narrative voice--through in sum the art of the text. The procedure continues, in some detail, the expository pattern employed for "Dig a Grave," first

documenting the specificities of each fundamental term, and then concluding with a consideration of the actual artistic achievement and development in the text.

Part One sounds the first note of opposition and conflict in the conjunction of nature and love/passion. This is the signal of a conflict that demonstrates a varying pattern of relation, but overall a progressive definition with respect to God and ultimately art. By Grand Central acknowledges a dichotomy between nature and love/passion but also endorses the conviction that they must be brought into a relation. The text is in one way, a record of this interaction of conflict and assimilation. Most importantly this process is articulated within the time-space of art, of a narrative I, and of an absent God. Succinctly, there is an identification and opposing of art and "natural salvation", two divergent conceptions of creation, two contending principles of control, two possible frameworks for the conjunction of nature and love/passion.

In Part One of By Grand Central, the previously positively described relation of nature and of the human (the relation whereby the desired englobing, expanding and merging of the narrator of "Dig a Grave" is the same power exhibited in the process of natural blossoming and the two spheres indiscriminately interpenetrate) is now intricately intertwined with images of poison, catastrophe, murder, sin, guilt and punishment. Nature ceases to present an unambiguous model. Its duplicity of purpose becomes confounding. The narrator of By Grand Central, on the verge of an affair, laments that "there is no medicinal to be obtained from the dried herbs of any natural hill, for when I tread those upward paths, the lowest vines conspire to abet my plot, and the poisonoak thrusts its insinuation under my foot" (24). After

the consummation of passion with the male lover, imaged through a merging in a metaphor of earth and rain, the narrator voices a feeling of tension: "Absolve me, I prayed, up through the cathedral redwoods, and forgive me if this is sin. But the new moss caressed me and the water over my feet and the ferns approved me with endearments" (28).

In Part Three, the narrator exorcises the dark undercurrents of the conjunction and proclaims that "not all the poisonous tides of the blood I have spilt can influence these tidals of love" (43). At this point the young female lover's vision of the world is dominated by an "intense fusion" (43) that turns the world to water and initiates an overwhelming, interpenetrating process of metamorphosis:

> When we lie near the swimming pool in the sun, he comes through the bamboo bushes like land emerging from chaos. But I am the land, and he is the face upon the waters. He is the moon upon the tides, the dew, the rain, all seeds and all the honey of love. My bones are crushed like the bamboo-trees. I am the earth the plants grow through. (44)

The spirit is one of jubilation, and is very reminiscent of the "Be wind, be sky, ... " invocations of the narrator of "Dig A Grave":

> But I have become a part of the earth: I am one of its waves flooding and leaping. I am the same tune now as the trees, hummingbirds, sky, fruits, vegetables in rows. I am all or any of these. I can metamorphose at will. (47)

There has been, however, a shift in the origin and ground of this expression of the power of metamorphosis. It is now the voice of the narrator, transformed according to an ideal of a visionary or beyond human

consciousness that assumes the function of maker, "This is the state of angels, ... " (47), and the I becomes a true centre, "I was taunted so long. The meaning fluttered above my head, always out of reach. Now it has come to rest in me" (46). The natural paradigms of unfolding, meeting, and merging are perceptions governed by an eye that has assumed a role of generator between heaven and earth--of creator of unity and harmony. Thus the narrator fairly sings, "There is no angle the world can assume which the love in my eye cannot make into a symbol of love" (43).

This organic cohesion between the human and the natural is reiterated in Part Six, although the I is now under duress, and the voice is directed towards a wavering and inconstant lover. In fact it might be remarked that nature's cooperation is only an assumption, and the focus of the address has shifted to emphasize the union of male with female as a sustaining point for metamorphosis: "Eons have been evolving and planets disintegrating and forming to compel these two together" (79). All this is still very much controlled by an understanding that supercedes and creates the human: "Not that I claim to be an angel too. But I know that to be even gently bright and happy raises enemies" (78).

By Part Nine, this cohesion and intertwining of nature and human passion can no longer be maintained by the narrator, bereft of the support of her lover. The perception of nature is opposed to human passion, and a higher purpose is brought forth: "Forty days in the wilderness and not one holy vision. Sights to dazzle the eye, but I bask in the sun without drawing one metaphor from it. Nature is using me. I am the seedbag" (113). When, in fact, the female lover "hurries to catch the train, [clutching her] ticket to damnation" (114) at the conclusion of Part Nine, there has clearly been a

radical separation and nature is now envisaged from the point of view of her role as "the officious housewife," and as a "[tigress fighting for her embryo]," and the idea of "natural salvation" (114) is rejected.

Nature at the point of conception and generation becomes a "Judas of fallacy" (117), and is at fatal odds with passion: nature at this point inhibits the flow of inspiration and the metamorphic creation in words. The narrator writes of her state of inactivity and unresponsiveness, "But I draw no parallels from patterns, and throw off no silver-sparkled words from my encounters" (113). Part Nine is both a succumbing to and an overcoming of the promise of "natural salvation," and a dramatic recognition of the implications of a promise made to love. Part Three had interjected a more than human will and understanding into the universe of love and nature, and its creation was the birth of love; Part Nine interjects this same will and understanding even more determinedly as the seductive quality of "natural salvation" is almost universally accepted:

> The grass is already green in the country. My imagination clutches that fact like a hot-water bottle, and makes itself dopey with it, and uses it like a drug to ease my heart and quiet all my sources of unrest. My future is already planted there, and my hope getting ready to sprout with the cherry blossom. (107)

The cherry tree provides the metaphoric image around which the female I is able to understand, focus, and relate the attraction and the conflict:

> Like the madman with his askew eyes glued to a bead, I see that cherry tree and the green grass, and focus on it, and bend all in that direction. (108)

> I reach the cherry tree and we all blossom. Or I reach the tree and we die. But I reach the tree. That is my entire plan and all the goal for my remaining forty years, if, as seems impossible, so many remain. (108)

And it is the image with which she speaks her final rejection: "Bow down thou tall cherry tree, I am going to meet my lover" (114).

Nature is overcome and transformed through the power of a visionary perception and creation--through the power a metamorphic principle of generation espoused by the narrator. This appropriation of a creative principle by the female lover is particularly contingent upon the changing status of God in the dissolving network of interconnectedness that forms the basis of By Grand Central. As has been noted God's removal from the universe opens up a time-space for a human assumption of power, and the text assimilates through its narrative the conflicts of nature and love/passion to a confrontation with God's absence. That absence is brought into view at the very outset of the text, at the very transition from Part One to Part Two.

Part One of By Grand Central ends with the line, "The Thing is at hand. There is nothing to do but crouch and receive God's wrath" (31), and this belief becomes the anticipation of the entire text. Judgment is delayed until Part Ten, and Part Two instead begins with a call to God: "God, come down out of the eucalyptus tree outside my window, and tell me who will drown in so much blood" (35). The significance of this address by the narrator is clarified later in Part Nine when the I queries "How can any woman from this empty world construct communication with God (109)?" By Grand Central establishes the essential condition of life in the world to be the

inaccessibility and inscrutability of God, yet affirms the consistent effort of the human to make contact with the absent creator. The absence becomes for the narrator a challenge (Part Two) and is answered through the assertion of the I as maker. The idea of maker in By Grand Central is both a powerful and invulnerable concept (Part Three) and a vulnerable yet resistant concept (Part Ten): the idea of maker as creator, and as creator/watcher is presented in the two Parts respectively.

Part Two emphasizes the inaccessibility of God when the narrator, beseiged by the opponents of God prays to "God to understand [her] corrupt language" and tell her if there "Is an infant struggling in the triangular womb (36)?" The narrator then realizes that "God is out of earshot" (39) and "Jesus Christ walks the waters of another planet, bleeding only history from his old wounds" (39). What is remarkable here, as the absence of God becomes confirmed, is the increasing interest shown by the narrator in finding other support, from "parchment philosophers" (39), for example, from "Gabriel, Michael of the ministering wing" (40), and from herself "My heart is its own destructive. It beats out the poisonous rhythm of the truth" (40). As paradoxical as the event of human passion has been, bleeding the world in a calamitous devastation, and entwining the I within a vision of sorrow and sin, the"rhythm of truth"(40) is also therein articulated. The strength required for the coming time, thus, must of necessity be god-like: "What was your price, Gabriel, Michael of the ministering wing? What pulley from headlong man pulled you up in the nick of time, till you gushed vegetable laughter, and fed only off the sun (40)?" For this bravado, Christ seems inadequate and able to offer only the repetition of history.

In contrast to "Dig a Grave" in which God was simply an omnipresent and

permeating spirit in a human and natural universe, tending toward harmony and integration, God has been distinguished and placed in a relation of distance to the narrator of By Grand Central. The presence of God in the earlier work can be seen as being inhibitive with respect to the creation of a centre focused in the human I of the story. In By Grand Central the absence or hiddenness of God provides an impulse to the formation of a concept of maker, an I which can create and sustain the visionary perspective of By Grand Central.

The absence of God has direct implications for the nature and role of inspiration. In "Dig a Grave," invocations were made directly to the body, to the sensual receptors since they were still entwined within a natural/spiritual context that was especially coloured by the perception of love/passion expressed in natural images. Inspiration received a holy sanction deriving from God, and flowed to and through the narrator undeterred by an artistic consciousness.

By contrast, inspiration in By Grand Central is most notably drawn from the literary, from myth and legend (pagan and Biblical) and in so doing parallels the movement of the text at other levels of theme and structure towards a vision of artistic creation and willing. Inspiration by centering in the word, "I can compress the whole Mojave Desert into one word of inspiration" (48), emphasizes the context for creation as existing in the concept of maker and in the power of the word. The language of metaphor creates its own source of inspiration. The act of naming, in word or in metaphor, is an invocation to eternally recurring figures and events that are thereby established in a timeless aspect--through the voice of an I dominated by a consciousness beyond the human. Inspiration derives at this point in

Smart's development as artist from the literary, from the transformations of reality effected by texts. Heavenly inspiration is renewed through the agency of the I considered as maker.

The configuration of terms peculiar to By Grand Central achieves final form with the incorporation of the will within the realigned pattern of relations. This appropriation of will is perhaps less readily understood given the indirection in its presentation--"the will" appears infrequently in the text, although rather prominently and forcefully on the first page, "and all the muscles of my will are holding my terror to face the moment I most desire." A concept of will is however operating to produce certain defining qualities of the text, which is especially manifest in the powerful expressions of integration, harmony and metamorphosis. The narrative voice is in these instances imposing her vision through her own fierce will.

A comparison with the function of will in "Dig a Grave" brings the action and significance of will into clearer focus. In the earlier text, the will emerged as a strong animal and natural counterforce to selfhood and to a passive, analytical rationality. The will was made a key element in the motion towards harmony and integration and towards a fearlessness of vision. In By Grand Central the animal strength and appetite is carried over in the conception of will but there is now a different controlling context in the newly achieved perspective of artistic consciousness. The will now operates within the purpose and design determined by a higher, transcendent perception. Correspondingly the sensual grounding is made subsidiary to an intentionality best likened to the the will of God, to wrath and to judgment. The I as maker assumes a role and function congruent with these religious perspectives and the will is activated according to this model. There is recognizably an

element of wrath and judgment in the narrator's rejection of the opponents of visionary love. The will bent towards love is merciless: as the narrator proclaims, "There is no room for pity, of anything. In a bleeding heart I should find only exhilaration in the richness of the red" (46).

IV

Art and Anti-Art

With By Grand Central, Smart's practice of art demonstrates a forceful commitment to language, and to the centrality and generating power of the narrative voice. Art acknowledges and finds a potential solution to the disjunction within the entwined spheres of the natural, the human and the spiritual. The ideal of harmonious integration and looping, a persistent desire of Smart and her narrative voices, is refocused through an art which, in a realization of the power inherent in language, supercedes a principle of mimesis. Art becomes that power which creates rather than expresses the communion of integration in life. By Grand Central is a singular revelation of this new imperative of art as it attempts to assert its authority, particularly in respect of its structure and its use of repetition.

It has become common among Smart's readers to consider the parts of By Grand Central as being loosely held together through a narrative recounting of an illicit love affair, from consummation through dissolution. A few readings, however, and this interpretation seems untenable. The parts are only superficially held together by the narrative device of plot, and, in fact, each part possesses a discreteness of theme and voice that resists a sequential ordering. That the work is not grounded in a realistic narrative

is at least intimated by the realization that one governing parameter for the whole is the natural cycle which commences in summer and concludes not in winter, but in spring--a presage of Smart's creative "roar of authority" (meantime 157).

The parts unfold within a structure which is characterized by centripetal motion toward a point of determined integration, against a contrary centrifugal motion, to conflict and disjunction. The structure becomes a significant component of an art which is a determination to bring life to its own centre, to create a "synthesis of meaning" from concerted opposition. In this way Parts Three, Six, the last section of Part Nine and one level of Part Ten are statements or records of the story's I, oriented to transforming the time of social and natural existence into a timeless present of "Today." The I confidently proclaims "All time is now, and time can do no better. Nothing can ever be more than now, and before this nothing was" (45). The I attempts to create, out of opposition and tension, centres of completion, "All I want is for everyone to go away and leave me a thousand lives in which to muse, only to muse, on this state of completion" (46). These centres are, in one way, the crystallizations through which art bestows the attributes of eternality, meaning, and the newness of a beginning to the actions and events of time. In another way, the centres express a conception of art which acknowledges a power added to life, an organization of image and metaphor which is a creation of "angelic" quality. Art is brought to participate in a process of making, superceding an earlier function as covering and "drapery".

Parts Two, Four, Five, Seven, most of Eight and Nine, and one level of Ten present differing aspects of opposition which art (ordered metaphor) must confront and overcome: Part Two presents the opponents of God, (the figure of

pity, the other woman, "all smitten Europe wailing" [37]); Parts Four and Five, society ("the eyes of the jealous world"(54) law); Part Seven, the comprehensive repetition of oppositions in dream (gaol, the other woman, the hospital); Part Eight, history and unpunctuated time, and the chaos of facts; Part Nine, nature; and Part Ten, linear progression. By Grand Central orders opposition, and places it in relation to the spirit and understanding of a fictional I bent on a visionary conception of love ever more determinedly, distressfully and daringly proclaimed (46). In Part Three the narrator concludes her song-like celebration of the victory and power of love with the lines, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is as strong as death" (49), and repeats the declaration in her address to the wavering lover in Part Six. By Part Nine the narrator's desertion by the lover provokes the final reckless and challenging ultimatum:

> The next generation cannot dam my passion. No one can throw me a pulley. I must retrace my steps and embrace my sentence. I cannot live out of earshot of my doom, hoping to salvage something from the blood.... Love is my double or nothing. (113)

This rejection of "natural salvation" (114) at Part Nine's ending prepares very directly for the opening epiphanic proclamation: "By Grand Central Station I sat down and wept: I will not be placated by the mechanical motions of existence.... It is the sin of damnation" (117). The female narrator has arrived at an understanding that equates "natural salvation" with acquiescence, betrayal, death and damnation and that generates the surrealistic/biblical dream, an ultimate prayer for judgment and revelation:

> The pain was unbearable, but I did not want it to end:
> It had operatic grandeur. It lit up Grand Central Station

like a Judgment Day. It was more iron-muscled than Samson in his moment of revelation. (118)

The structuring of By Grand Central marks an advance over "Dig a Grave" in that art is removed from the taint of imitation or mimesis, an implicit assumption in "Dig a Grave," wherein life is seen to take precedence over art, existing prior to articulation in language. Perception, which grounds art, is in the earliest accounts solely the perception of love; in By Grand Central although "there is no angle the world can assume which the love in my eye cannot make into a symbol of love" (43), the perception is a visionary creation. "The language of love" (126) attempts to generate love in its own generation and this is the message of the structure of opposition and declaration of power, of the whole. The Parts of proclamation of power and invulnerability represent the struggle of art to create unity, harmony and integration: these moments of statement are the I's attempts to situate sensual love in an environment of expansion, enveloping, and merging that is beyond the controlling confines of nature, and natural human procreancy.

The structure of By Grand Central--tending, striving, towards unity of vision--is preeminently grounded in the idea of battle. In the end By Grand Central does not sustain its vision. The opponents to sensual love, particularly, are strong, and the champion of the visionary becomes a solitary, increasingly exiled young woman. The moments of feeling of invulnerability are voiced against growing opposition and the crystallization of centres of power more difficult to achieve. Thus Part Three is the strongest statement of the reality of a created love--"there are no problems, no sorrows or errors: they join in the urging song that everyone sings" (47)--and stands apart from all such moments in its strength. The repetition

of power in Part Six is of lesser potency. The narrator again pronounces that "love is as strong as death" (75) but from a weakened position. The lover has deserted the union and the I speaks her declaration as a record for herself, and as a reproach to her lover. The message begins to be turned back upon itself, and power of the voice ebbs. Part Ten is, in one way, the climactic conclusion of this movement in the direction of solitude and exile. The absolute affirmation of the opening lines, "I will not be placated by the mechanical motions of existence," is turned aside from completion: "Lay aside the weapons, love, for all battles are lost" (127); and "Now this is no hour and it leads nowhere" (124). The language of love is decried by a voice in defeat, "O the tumult, the unavailing ineffectual uproar of the damned. O the language of love. The uninterpreted. The inarticulate" (126). The language of love now has no meaning in time and cannot be spoken or understood.

Part Ten, the section of exile sees the sundering of art from its conjunction with the world, with life and love. The meaning that is synthesized by the narrator is a fallen vision and visionary purpose is usurped by "Tomorrow, like an ardent boy of Socrates" (125), claiming the power of resurrection. Language, at one time able to synthesize "the state of angels," can now only articulate exile and love falls away from its centre in art, "My lover lies under the linden-tree kissing Tomorrow with his mouth that was all mine" (126). By Grand Central is at one and the same time an expression of the power and failure of art as transformer and the narrator moves a step closer toward the feeling expressed in "What Is Art? Said Doubting Tim" (1982):

> It's shape, art, it's order, Tim
>
> For the amorphous pain;

And it's a hymn,

.....

The maker makes
Something that seems to explain
Fears, delirious sunsets, pain.
... But a calming balm comes
From Form--a missile that lasts
At least until tomorrow
Or the next day. (meantime 36)

By Grand Central presents a "final ultimatum" (114), a "fierce last stand" (119) for the integration of the human in love/passion, a state sustained and created only by a maker of greater than human understanding:

Oh yes, it is the hysteria that whips me with his name, that drives me with the insane loneliness of the first split amoeba, to shriek beneath his window. As if all future worlds lay in the conjunction of our separated cells, I writhe in desperation, screaming his name, as my germ dwindles, as the whole universe withers, like a corolla no bee ever found. (122)

Without this fact of conjunction art is reduced to an explanation, a "balm." There may even be a momentary "leap from gravity," a sporadic impassioned dithyramb but not a celebration of communion (meantime 36). This thematic expression of the dissolution of the integration of the natural, the human and the heavenly in a textual structure of tension and opposition is further affirmed through similarly grounded, characterizing repetitions.

In By Grand Central art functions to sustain life within centres of

timeless invulnerability. In Smart's earliest work, the image was the chief feature of artistic expression and structure adhered to traditional chronological narrative conventions ("Dig a Grave"). In By Grand Central the image recurs as a constituent feature of the text, but organized into patterns of repetition that parallel the structural pattern determined by centripetal and centrifugal forces. There is, in fact, an overwhelming repetitiveness of word, metaphoric image and scene that is either concentered into a configuration of unity or dispersed: towards the circumference of a cyclical recurrence (as in the dream of the hospital, for example) on the one hand, and in an uncompromising linear progression (the enumeration of fact in Part Eight) on the other. The repetition of word and image either identically or with slight variation is pervasive although not initially as distinguishable as the repetition of allusion.

Examples of this kind of repetition of phrase include: from the first page of Part One the phrase "hanging fire" (19) which recurs in Part Nine "postpone indefinitely the miracle hanging fire" and "what of my angel, her now lost angel, hanging fire" (109); "creeping fingers of cold" (Part One 20) and fingers of the cold, the little creeping fingers of dissuasion (last line Part Eight 104); "then she leans over in the pool and her damp hair falls like sorrow" (Part One 27) and "Then her hair, falling like grief, floats in the deserted park" (Part Eight 99); "vines of faith" (Part One 20) and "vines of remorse" (Part Two 36); "the wound which swung in perpetual suspension above her [the wife] and though I swing in torture" (Part Two 35), and "So tonight we will put the whole untidy world into a nest, and it will hang swinging comfortably" (Part Six 75), "He swings delirious into the night" (Part Ten 124); "What pulley from headlong man" (Part Two 40) and "No one can throw me a

pulley" (Part Nine 113); "my possible phoenix of love is as bright as a totem pole" (Part Two 40) and "past totem poles of danger" (Part Eight 102). Certain words are likewise repeated frequently: "claws" (Two, Six, Seven and twice in Eight); "prove" or "proof" (twice in Two, and once in Three, Four, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine); "polestars" (twice in Eight and in Ten); and "hole" ("bore a hole" and "gimlet a hole" in Nine, and "when every hole bleeds me" and "burn holes in the darkness" in Ten).

There are also certain key metaphoric scenes which recur: in Part Two the narrator in despair of presaged calamity expresses a jealousy of the "hawk because he can get so far out of the world" (26) and the "passionate seagull swooping to possible cessation" (26), two possible alternatives for action which are reiterated in an exploration of remedies in Part Nine, "lest I too much remember, that I become a hermit, that I strain forever upward, or descend in a shower of the spirit's blood" (110); in Part Two the narrator, caught "in the trap" (36) of passion laid by God's opponents "lets self contemplate self which only suicide can join" (37). The image is one of the narrator regarding her reflection in the ocean bed, "Pearls and bubbles float up from the ocean bed, making a prettier noose for death, the last decoration of self-love, ring-a-rosing the gruesome vision" (38). This narcissistic scene repeats itself in Part Eight when the I is caught viewing herself in a hotel mirror, "The sight of that mad face in the half-lit room drove me to prayers and loud noise./ Your own shadow meeting you announces the end" (94); and indirectly presages the drowning of By Grand Central's conclusion. The image of "Tomorrow [looking] down at the drowned with resurrection in his eyeballs" (125) is an ironic reversal of the initial occurrences of the image--an ironic revelation of narcissistic consummation. In Part One the

image of the appletree is introduced "Alas, I know he is the Hermaphrodite whose love looks up through the appletree with a golden indeterminate face" (23), and begins a sequence of scenes and images concerned with the earthly fruit: "Stay with me flagons, comfort me with apples" (Part Four 54); "(Also our bed is green. And the smell of his nose like apples)" (83), "as the appletree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved" (85) in the dream of Part Seven; in Part Eight the lover becomes her "gravity" and "the apples (which ben ripe in [her] gardayne) fall only towards that" (103), and in Part Ten the apples are associated with the language of love, "It is the first cry of my never to be born child. Go into your garden, for your apples are ripe" (127).

The repetitions, as suggested with the above chronicling are pervasive, being intertwined within the total textual fabric. The repetitions tend to parallel the structural patterns of concentering and dispersal as has been noted, with the individual words and phrases generating, in one direction, centers of concentration and, in another, unformed accretions of words. Within the pattern of concentering the repetitions can be seen as reenforcing the narrator's attempt to bring life to its own point of creation: the language of visionary perception participates in a creative generation that is opposed to an organic model. Where the repetitions recur identically there is an intensification, a heightening, a unification of the language of the text around specific centers. Where the repetitions recur with slight variation (as in self contemplating self) the text sets up a systematic echoing which, however, still rebounds to a centre. Repetitions, from this perspective, represent the attempts of the narrator to concentrate the language of art, to establish centres which will yet be the source of an infinite and

all-encompassing vision. This is the paradox and the burden of the idea of recurrence: the vision, the word, phrase, image repeats, concentering all occurrences in time and space, yet each repetition is a new birth, that has no history: "It has happened, the miracle has arrived, everything you touch is born" (45).

Repetition, where not directed to a special centre, suffers dispersal. The effect is a projection outwards against love's force of gravity, which the narrator affirms, "for all day and all night, away from him and with him, everywhere and always, that is my gravity, and the apples ... fall only towards that" (103). Part Eight is especially indicative of the centrifugal patterns of By Grand Central, imaging the outward movement, in one way, as a dispersal towards a bounded circumference, "I know the exact measurements of my captivity. For I cannot escape by bashing my head against the box-like confine, nor can I summon into my company ghosts with visionary eyeballs" (92). Part Seven emphasizes, and adds another dimension to this recurrence viewed as a spiralling away from a center of willing and action, interjecting the frustrated confinement in dream: the repetition is comprehensive but without purpose and vision. The stark image and paralysis of this entrapment within an unyielding circumference is presented in the opening of Part Ten, "But what except morphine can weave bearable nets around the tigershark that tears my mind to shreds, seeking escape on every impossible side" (117). The voice of the I at this point is exiled from its own centre of vision.

Dispersal has yet another aspect and that is represented through sequence, through non-centred linear accumulation. Part Eight's overwhelming repetition of facts and of the word "fact" (occurring fifteen times in all) are evidence of such recurrence not consolidated through visionary perception, a

frustration that the female I depressingly acknowledges, "I review all I know, but can synthesize no meaning" (103); and protests "Is no fact impregnable? Is there no once-in-a-billion years' bull's-eye worth even the slaughter of decisive action (103)?" This is the ultimate negation of vision effected by linear generation and progression--history.

By Grand Central ends with the juxtaposition of the centripetal and the centrifugal: the conclusion is built up from the surreal, phantasmagoric opposing of divergent motions. In one direction the I attempts to hold on to the concentering and redeeming vision of love ("No morbid adolescent ever clutched toward melodramatic conclusion so wildly" [122]) and judgment, and in another it acquieses to an enforced exile. The concluding scene seems to draw the juxtaposed currents towards a decided resolution that denies the power of love and gives the world over to the power of progress and generation:

> Like the genii at hell's gates, the darkie porters arrive,
> and usher in the day with brooms and enormous dustpans.
> Odours of disinfectant wipe out love and tears. With rush
> and thunder the early workers overrun the world they have
> inherited, tramping out the stains of the wailing, bleeding
> past. (127-8)

But the drowned narrator's final lines beginning "I myself prefer Boulder Dam...." are a spirited parody of the lover's acquiescence, and the final taunting question, "My dear, my darling, do you hear me where you sleep (128)?" extends the text's observed tension and opposition into exile.

IV

Rogues and Rascals

The conclusion of By Grand Central leaves one with an implicit problem concerning the possibilities for art in an acknowledged state of exile and captivity. Art seems to have been rendered ineffectual as an instrument of transformation and metamorphosis, and the long silence that ensued between Smart's publication of By Grand Central and her other writings seems to endorse art's abandonment. The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals published in 1978 (although deriving in part from notebook entries for the immediate post-war years), negates the rejection hypothesis, and is her answer to artistic vision and production in a fallen state. Rogues and Rascals directly addresses the possibility for art in those years after the Second World War, and for those years separating the ardour of human passion from old age and death. It affirms artistic creation as a necessity: "But the bleak point, the boring truth, the stark illogical necessity is simple as a rose's : the eccentric genes impart their message : Write! and the moving finger writes through gales" (120). In so doing Rogues and Rascals redefines once more recurring features of her conception of art, the configurations of nature, love/passion, God, inspiration, and will.

By Grand Central identified two potential contexts for love/passion, the counterforces of vision and nature. Rogues and Rascals continues this distinction but with significant differences: first, the boundary between the two spheres shifts as love is more and more assimilated to nature; second, sexual love becomes tainted with the motivations of the womb, considered as

part of nature; and third, an idealizing, nostalgic perspective is introduced, although counterbalanced by a visionary interpolation.

The following quotation from Part Seven, "Lament of a Maker," illustrates the evolving mistrust of human love, once the central motivation, force and goal of language:

> You can manipulate the bright distracting forever escaping moment. But not if you revolve back to a slushy need for love on every side: to be smothered and suspended and surrounded in over around and by it. (67)

The mistrust is indirectly but powerfully confirmed when the narrator, apparently "a woman of 311/2, with lice in her hair and a faithless lover" (35), addresses God in deference to the "midwife nature":

> I try to remember how, when birth comes, the dam will break, and God will assume His majesty and roll in pain like an avenger over my drenched soul, and love and blood flow back into the world. (30)

There is a deepening and widening segregation of love from love, or rather of natural love from visionary love, to the extent that even sensual love becomes suspect. The womb inevitably becomes involved: thus the almost wistful perception of By Grand Central's narrator that sex has "the innocent slipping advent of the next generation, which enters in one night of joy, and leaves a meadowful of lamenting milkmaids when its purpose is grown to fruit" (25), is brutally noted in the rumination of the I of Rogues and Rascals, "Far away, long ago, the first rumbling intimations of the cruel sexual bargain to come" (23).

The tainting of sensual love focuses attention to the boundary between nature

and the human: the insinuation of "cruel sexual bargain" creates a polarity articulated and imaged for the first time in Rogues and Rascals. This is a polarity which is made to turn round the incompatibility of visionary and sensual love--visionary love is timeless and sensual love is in time. By Grand Central presented sensual love as a creation of visionary love, Rogues and Rascals suggests that sensual love may be just a natural event, unredeemable by vision and complicit with generation, "Adam delved and Eve span. / In their sorrow they brought forth children" (22).

Rogues and Rascals is grounded at precisely this acute position: "Out of this weary landscape, girding your strengths around you, you are to step through a couple of decades with your children on your back, ... looking to left and right" (15); and "A couple of decades will see you out of this bondage" (16). This work of Smart's is a testament to those years sandwiched between love and middle age, a period at cross purposes with making, "The womb's an unwieldy baggage. Who can stagger uphill with such a noisy weight (59)?"

Under the burden of an uncompromising demarcation of love and nature, as seen from the visionary perspective, a certain idealization and nostalgia inevitably characterize the narrator's thoughts. Unfallen states of nature and love are imaged by the narrator, and form points of sadness and recollection that are a constant presence in the work. Thus in "Lament of a Maker," nature becomes linked with childhood innocence:

> Child lying stiff on one elbow like a frozen prayer, don't
> listen to chaos below. Will vigilance avert calamity?
> Relax into innocence. Go and cry in a secret part of the
> wood, where a wild clematis will compensate for pain.

> Build a bush house and kiss worms.... The mud reminds you of the comfortable beginning of the world, before the immense edict shrugged us into isolation. (70)

This memory of the comforting of childhood within an innocent nature sharply clarifies, by contrast, the association of guilt with the advent of sexuality and the demands of the womb--nature's other face. There is a direct link, moreover, from this pre-fall vision to the idealized perception of sexual union in Part Nine, "The Story of Our Life." The narrator comments upon "two ecstatic newts in long embrace," in a "smeared glass jar":

> Is it their pale glowing colour that brings primaeval memories, or their frozen rapturous dance, poised above the decaying vegetable matter, the mud and stones, and the wet snake in the bottom of the jar? So private a preoccupation, so regardless, stirs up dreams of perfection, so sad from where I stand. (90)

Again and again Rogues and Rascals comes back to the "cruel sexual bargain," to the Godlessness of the "mid-wife" nature (30), and to human passion which is inevitably lost. Visionary love forms only a regret, an intimation of a "perfection" beyond "natural salvation," a persistent sadness confronted with an ideal of love not to be "borne" (25). As the I implies in "Pacification," the last Part, love that is not this love, is "not the point," is, in fact, "beside the point" (120). The narrator goes on to suggest that all the stories of love recounted throughout the text have only "[entertainment]" value--"those places, people, things, moments were just/pretty places to stop. Mitigations. Refreshments" (120).

And yet there are sporadic outbreaks that echo earlier feelings, and suggest a resurrection of faith in an energetic and active love. The implication seems to be that these are random occurrences, but occurrences productive of a counterbalancing power. "The Assumption of the Rogues and the Rascals," Part Five of the work is the interjection of an odd moment of imaginative vision onto an otherwise bleak and safe landscape. It is also the narrator's endorsement of an inversion of values ("Strut in your scarlet coat" [40]). The transvaluation of values here in a "Wasteland" setting is a blatant reassertion, in a comic mode, of the anti-law spirit of By Grand Central: the rogues and rascals "cadge and cheat" and "double-cross" with "divine machiavellianism" but "there is still enough love," and then more; and "they are received into heaven" (48). The inverted view here and elsewhere, described with such delight, "The rogues and rascals wiggle their bums in the sky (46)," provides a consistent comic potentiality to what would otherwise become an uninterrupted lament, "Already tragedy turns to comedy, a better form" (111).

To the extent that love and nature are of equivocal import and the rogues and rascals a kind of "myth-preservation" (39), a precarious stop-gap, Smart's narrator falls back on a faith in God, inspiration, and the will, supportively intertwined. As in "Dig a Grave," the I is constituted through faith in the existence of God, in his affirmation of love ("and God will assume His majesty ... and love and blood flow back into the world" [30]), and in his evident although insrutable involvement in artistic endeavor. In Part Ten, "Fear of Failing," God actually overwhelms the idea of an I derived through self-consciousness, and creation is understood as a gift of God's, unsought, and freely imparted, "Merely a buttery-fingered effort of God's. And nothing

to do with your deserted screaming forsakenly dreary unproven gifts" (98). There is, further, an elaboration and acceptance by the narrator of a division of the human into the traditional dichotomy of body and soul, attributable to God, "But what a daring thing to do, God: to make such a flimsy, vulnerable, decayable, corruptible, demanding delicate casing for the soul (spirit)" (99). This is Rogues and Rascals' confirmation of a spiritual principle operating, although removed, in the universe.

Artistic power derives from this spiritual source, which effectively sanctions the interrelation of body with soul. Thus the narrator interrogates herself over this very point and is accommodated to the conjunction:

> Wasn't it a fantastic stroke of genius on the part of
> the Almighty to take such a foolhardy chance?
> Is it proving justified?
> I think so. (99)

> .... It's the possibilities of this flayed squashable
> breakable instrument--just because it's so exposed, so
> open, so killable, so able notwithstanding to receive a
> million million divergent messages at one and the same
> time.... (100)

The significance accorded to God in Rogues and Rascals also renews the narrator's reliance on the will and inspiration. The will becomes the active factor linking the human to God and is the fundamental condition for making and being good:

> In the meantime, get a furious weapon. A rage of will.
> Rise above your turmoil. Exert yourself a swirl above

> the most you can exert yourself. More? Yes, more every minute. Ounce by ounce. Inch by inch. This is the cruel Lord's will. And the way, too. To be good. Or to make. (67)

The will of the human maker is in this manner brought into the service of the concept of judgment, that acknowledges a fallen existence, but presents a way to divert and transform the inherent pain of such existence:

> To a child such desperation coming across the lake explained itself. There perished an early pioneer, born in the wrong place, in the wrong time, without a furious weapon. (71)

God and the will, in their sanction of such creative transformation, maintain the hope and promise of love, in the desire for judgment, or in the terms of the maker, in the desire for a springtime assertion of epiphanic power.

Implicitly the instigation to a "rage of will" turned towards a "furious pen" (67) is the result of an inspiration whose origin is clouded in some mystery, but inevitably is aligned with a principle beyond the body: "Its [the body's] needs conflict with ours. It is not amused by the muse" (108). The muse is possibly connected with the ego--"Is ego a prick to the muse then (109)?"-- a question among many raised concerning the operation of artistic inspiration in Part Eleven, "On, on." The reflections end on the recollection of Philoctetes, his "running sore" (109), and his favoring by the muse (perversion, wickedness and defilement are the first notes struck in "On, on," in the evocations of youthful female innocence and famine in the heart of the city [107]). The implication seems to be that the muse, thus connected to the diseased, to the agonising, offers a way out of the pain and the evil: "Deliver me. From evil. This is (109)?" This section introduces, significantly, Beckett and the notion of comedy as an outgrowth and

transformation of tragedy.

The artistic fruit of these redefinements and changing configurations of Smart's fundamental terms of reference is vastly different from any previous work, in theme, in language and in structure. Rogues and Rascals has abandoned the tightly controlled, echoing and recurring structural characteristics of By Grand Central, so pertinent to the theme of harmonizing and integration. There are, too, surprisingly few legendary, mythical or historical allusions; repetitions are minimal; and metaphor is displaced as the unit of artistic expression. The ready to spring quality of the love song of By Grand Central is deflated in language of a homey and aphoristic tone:

> But this invocation sounds too highfalutin for the times ... (11)

> Slapdash he is thrown among the muddle, while harassed apprentices jostle the bloody pans. (37)

> ... a bulldozing over the old cosiness, crazy culpable cosiness ... (103)

> If you are overwhelmed, you might as well relax in the whirlpool. It's winning. All you can learn is ecstatic surrender. (123)

The structure of parts is not characterized by a pattern of opposition and concentering as in By Grand Central, rather there is a wandering and meandering quality to the text--a leading away from a story firmly and cohesively deriving from a central source, the narrative I, for example. There are also endless diversions from personal narration into pared story

telling, with peripheral characters woven into tales narrated from the third person point of view. Particularly, from Part Five onwards, the narration becomes quite diversified: other characters are introduced--David, "an elderly maladjusted sailor" (75), John; several stories are recounted--of Doris, a publican's wife, of Bob Devlin's mournful saxaphone, of Harry Osborne, a forgotten Canadian, and of Zena, newly delivered of her fourth child. The structure is not particularly sequentially connected, although there is a pervasive impression of motion, of "Forward," "just foot, foot, foot" (16). The titles of the parts encourage this notion of direction: "Signed on for the Duration"; "On, on"; tending toward "Pacification."

Part Nine, "The Story of our Life," suggests, however, another kind of ordering, a rhythmic, thematic pattern which imparts a coherence to the diversifications, and the narrator relates what is an archetypal paradigm for the whole and the parts:

> Chapter one : they were born.
>
> Chapter two : they were bewildered.
>
> Chapter three : they loved.
>
> Chapter four : they suffered.
>
> Chapter five : they were pacified.
>
> Chapter six : they died. (89-90)

Thus, surreptitiously, recurrence and echoing enter this last work of "concentrated prose." The effect is one of a bringing together--of an integration of the dispersed elements of the text (in actuality the stories themselves are the narrator's and Smart's stories persistently recurring) in a pattern suggestive of the thematic concern of the whole.

Rogues and Rascals is Smart's conception of art and of language,

formulated totally within the perspective of life as fallen, and within a perceived necessity for repentance and reparation (e.g. "After the War" sets the tone of the book). Art and language are constrained to function within the confines of "twenty year's hard labour for a big begetting sin"... (122)--of life determined by laws of the womb. Art, Rogues and Rascals implicitly suggests, provides the form without which the womb would overwhelm all, and it does this by giving a boundary, a time and space to those years of domination; by affixing those years as a state which must be passed through, but for which there is the possibility of movement towards a state of "ecstatic surrender" (123). Art is no longer visionary, but it is not yet again mimetic. Art has not become an expression of pain, but rather a transformation of pain, and in this way is an expression of love/passion--a vestige of the visionary.

Rogues and Rascals confirms the narrator in her solitude, compelled thereby to exclude genuine narrative--story, character, climax--and to reside within the stricture of the I. In this vein it is to be noted that the stories which the I relates were only diversions and the only real story is hers, "But there's only me. Large as life" (108). Yet, the narrator knows that it is "the non-me[I] that leads to the "blessed cross-fertilisation. Just as it is the unimaginability of God that is God" (112), and that it is the merging of the I in the spiritual universe that generates life, love and art. The ideal of a not-I, juxtaposed to a very confined I, highlights the tension that creates and sustains the structure of the work and that orients the whole towards life--towards pacification: "Gathering, gathering the bedclothes round their poor dying bones. Sweet decay. Sweet sweet spring" (55).

V

Pacification

After Rogues and Rascals Smart produced no other comparable artistic work. The eighties saw the publication of some new poems, including "Eleven Poems" in 1982, but no short novellas in the spirit or style of those just examined. "Diary of a Blockage" (1979) is the closest approach to an artistic text that exists from Smart's later years. This publication extends the tendency already evident in Rogues and Rascals to thematic discussion. Art thus becomes less a question of practice than of something to talk about: "(Never mind Why--why nag on about that: What is art? etc.) HOW" (154). And what art is said to be both draws and effaces a distinct line between the young Smart and the elderly. A line is now irrevocably drawn dividing nature from art and God: "[nature] is not interested in art, God, in anything but keeping the body in good working order" (136). Passion, too, is suspect and is made to fall on the wrong side--passion towards both the male lover and the mother, "I wasn't going to write about my mother--only the passionate relationship--serving nature (146)?" Age brings on the desire to "divest oneself of the love of created objects" (148); to get "back to where [one was] before [the] time-consumming, body-battering, emotion-wracking, soul-stealing parenthesis began" (144). This is very far from the affirmation of nature and passion of By Grand Central, "There are no problems, no sorrows or errors: they join in the urging song that everything sings" This is the state of the angels ... " (47), and the early notebooks and writing experiments.

A distinct line is effaced between the young Smart and the elderly concerning God's involvement in art: "I wasn't snuffling around these matters

in the early days. Trudge, trudge, in and out of the labyrinths of peoples sensibilities.... Better get in touch with Heaven again" (meantime 158). What continues unabatedly is the commitment to God, inspiration and the will. To read the older Smart is to recognize the unity of her writing within a spirit of holiness and transcendence: thus in "Diary of a Blockage" there is reference to "wanting to walk and talk with God" and black holes, concentrations of power, "able to give out HOLY energy" (meantime 133). These are the recurrent emphases of her writing and feeling: all are echoes of her earliest intimations, "Beauty is holy.... It is God" (Secrets 170).

What recurs through time is precisely the defining importance of certain terms of Smart's conception of art (those that have been identified in this study) and what changes is the basic configurations of those terms. Nature, love/passion, God, inspiration and the will draw the early to the late within the same sphere of reference. The changing alignments dichotomize the first and the last around the boundary between nature and love/passion, and God and art.

Interestingly, certain inclinations and intuitions in Smart's theorizations about and practice of art provide another measure of her constancy within obvious change and evolution. There is a persistent sameness over time concerning the tension between openness and certainty in making, "How can you be certain and yet open and trembling as a jelly ("Dig a Grave" and "Blockage" [meantime 62 and 138])?"; an ever present distrust of any form other than a personal account "Still there's nothing to tell, except what this (still) breathing nugget, ... can tell you. What's the use of pretending you know what's going on the other nuggets of life (meantime 151)?"; and a preference for a concentration of style, "So, maybe never a play, TV, radio,

or stage, only as usual, a distilled sentence or two, with the plot squashed into penny size" (meantime 140). Especially persistent is her commitment to the poem, note, and diary, "to raw moments and raw thoughts" and her distrust of "the devious method and hidden indirectness of the novel, ... the short story, or a play" (Secrets (201). These preferences and tendencies, expressed from the earliest notebook entries, provided the larger generic framework limiting Smart's experimentation and creation. Her perception was directed towards the inner and the personal in a quest for the source of visionary power--that power to conjoin art and life. Her constancy in her subject and her focus strengthened with time, and the I of her creation became poised at a point of inclusion and exclusion--of the I and the not-I.

VI

Conclusion

Smart's writings concentrate attention persistently and acutely to the boundary between nature and the inter-related configurations of the terms of aesthetic reference love/passion, God, inspiration and will. This paper has revealed a continual shifting in that boundary after the dissolution of an initial unity and harmonious integration (that distinguished no particular delimitation or separation). Progressively nature digressed, became enclosed within its own principle of governance and at odds with the human and God. By Grand Central was the first of Smart's works to be created out of this opposition and presented the first response to nature's confounding duplicity. Each subsequent work newly defined and delimited the opposition and the boundary.

This chronological unfolding became insistent in its message: the power of nature is pervasive and oppressive--"I cannot bear the lilac tree now. Even while I look it goes brown. Before I have taken the path across the field it will never be summer again," laments the narrator of Rogues and Rascals (36). Nature cannot be contained--it ultimately usurps the primal sanctity of the child/mother/womb (meantime 146), the governing paradigm of integration in Smart's universe, and coerces love/passion into a time-bound recurrence.

But it was the strength of Smart's vision, however darkly at times perceived, to identify nature's principle--to give it a bounding form and thus to counterbalance its force. By Grand Central was the first identification and revelation of the principle of natural salvation: an act of naming that determined movement simultaneously in two directions--away from life lived within nature and towards God and art. By Grand Central established its context simultaneously as separation and control. The act of naming released art from its bonding with nature and presented an imperative to artistic creation. By Grand Central responded to the challenge of natural salvation (with God as the model and sanctification) with an equally potent visionary perception and a contrary principle of metamorphosis.

In its power, metamorphosis suggested an alternate understanding of generation, a principle of generation defined by the human and by art. It presented the possibility for the incorporation of the womb into a meaningful human recurrence--an act of repetition and a new birth conjoined. This is the oblique message of By Grand Central's narrator in her reproach to her faithless lover:

> And also, your son does not step down out of his hammock

> to be anyone's scapegoat, but to collect his own apple with his own sin, as his son, too, will do at the proper time. (78)

The metamorphic principle extends the concept of magical transformation to become an all-encompassing principle of creation and relation (it penetrates and transforms fundamental sexual alignments in a constant metamorphic generation).

The metamorphic perception was eroded over time--it was never to be repeated in the power of the voice of By Grand Central--and progressively fell away from its central animating position. By "Diary of a Blockage" passion cannot be salvaged from the ravaging of natural generation. This submission seems to be constituted less, however, in a failure of vision than in the fact of exile. Without human support, a human partner, the metamorphic principle is denied its power of action in the world (this point cannot be underemphasized in a consideration of Smart's evolving suspicion of and antagonism towards nature and passion). Nature's boundary overwhelms all where the forces of progressive society endorse nature's rule and the redemption within vision is outlawed. This complicity of the natural and society determines vision as exile and damnation (the transition from Part Nine to Part Ten of By Grand Central).

The turning point of a metamorphic vision resides in an act of relation: nature is brought into alignment with love/passion in the generation of metamorphic art. This is an act of delimitation and conjunction constituted in a concept of control, determined by a visionary perception. By Grand Central represents this turning point: Smart's last writings are displaced from this centre, they abjure from the act of relation, but they do not renege from or subvert the implicit insight that nature, and God and art are

opposed--that God and art are the only creative sources in the universe, actualized or not. Her later reflections on the subject, extend and formalize the underlying directions of her inspired vision--away from a life lived within nature and towards God and art. Smart comes to rest within art, within the passionate spirit which one word has for another: and this is once more the repetition of By Grand Central's visionary conclusion--nature and art poised in tension and opposition--yet more starkly, absolutely, irrevocably drawn. Art now attains its freedom and independence in a self-referential creation which loses its earlier intimacy with love/passion and nature--this is the state of exile--but which bodes promise in the model and inspiration of God's potential redeeming judgment.

"Notes"

[1] Elizabeth Smart, rev. of "The Assumption of the Rogues and the Rascals," by Mary Hope, Spectator Mar. 1978: 24.

[2] Jill Neville, "Elizabeth Smart: An Appreciation," Aquarius 17/18 (1986-87): 146-47.

[3] Elizabeth Smart, Juvenilia: Early Writings of Elizabeth Smart, ed. Alice Van Wart (Toronto: Coach House, 1987).

[4] Michael Brian Oliver, "Elizabeth Smart: Recognition," Essays on Canadian Writing Fall 1978: 106-133.

[5] Published in the collection In the meantime, (Ottawa: Deneau, 1984) 43-92. The title is taken from William Blake's "Tiriel."

[6] Choice of terms was determined in the first instance by empirical evidence: what words Smart most frequently used to describe her theory and practice of art. Certain terms, for example, pain and desire, were rejected because they could be adequately contained and explained within the documentation of the changing relations within the fundamental terms of reference. Desire, especially, was directly avoided because of the interpretive limitation for a work too often seen as an expression of illicit desire for sexual passion. Love/passion does not exclude the expression of desire but it does open the text to broader levels of exploration beyond the specifically sexual bias. Smart's works are contained within the comprehensive articulation of the importance of visionary love and art over against the poverty and corruptions of nature and society.

[7] Published in the collection In the meantime, (Ottawa: Deneau, 1984) 131-159.

[8] Published in the collection In the meantime, (Ottawa: Deneau, 1984) 25-39.

[9] The Cassis notebook concerning Smart's stay in France and her tempestuous affair with artist Jean Varda (Yanko) is the strongest expression of the impulsion towards harmony and integration and presents an impassioned articulation of the initially entwined and supportive natural and religious context for her writings. Necessary Secrets (Toronto: Deneau, 1986): 170-77.

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